



aurora robson



THE GREAT INDOORS (KISSING THE GREAT OUTDOORS G'BYE??)

- A HIGHLY POPULATED LANDSCAPE COMPRISED OF SCULPTURES/ OBJECTS + A PASSAGE SYSTEM MADE ENTIRELY FROM DISCARDED PLASTIC BOTTLES
- SOME OBJECTS WILL HAVE A SUBTLE GLOW / L.E.D. / SOLAR POWERED? * TBD
- ALL ELEMENTS WILL BE LOOSELY BASED ON INTERNAL ORGANS & MICROSCOPIC / CELLULAR CONSTRUCTIONS / CONSUMPTION - CONSUMED BY THAT WHICH WE CONSUME - VEINS, VESSELS, CELLS, BACTERIA, VIRUSES, MICROORGANISMS, LIVERS, SPLEENS, KIDNEYS ETC....

aurora robson
the great indoors

18 September – 26 October 2008




Rice Gallery
HOUSTON, TEXAS

foreword

When Aurora Robson's installation, *The Great Indoors*, was on view at Rice Gallery in fall 2008, a visitor commented, "Wow, what elegance from plastic! I'm amazed." This simple response sums up Aurora's incredible skill and ingenuity as a sculptor, and the impact her work has on those who see it first-hand.

I was awestruck when I first saw Aurora's work at an art fair in 2006. *The Jungle* was a small installation of translucent sculptures in green and blue, elaborate compositions of sensuous, curving forms – ribbons, bubbles, and thin, antenna-like feelers. Suspended at varying heights and depths, they floated in a mysterious world, reminding me so much of plant life or deep-sea creatures that I was surprised to learn the fragile-looking sculptures were made entirely from re-used plastic bottles. The exceptional beauty of Aurora's work led me to contact her immediately and extend an invitation to explore her ideas on a larger scale at Rice Gallery.

The Great Indoors was a massive project requiring a high level of organizational skill. Aurora enlisted and trained a team of 20+ assistants to clean, cut, and rivet parts from the almost 15,000 bottles she used to form the components of the installation. After a summer of non-stop work and planning, Aurora arrived at Rice Gallery and worked for two weeks to construct an installation that had the feeling of spontaneity and effortlessness. Viewers entered a fantasy landscape based loosely on microscopic imagery of the human body and walked through membrane-like, translucent tunnels toward spaces filled with suspended sculptures containing solar-powered LED lights, which caused them to glow. Conceptually, the lights were part of Aurora's ecologically mindful approach and they accentuated the remarkable vocabulary of shapes and techniques she has devised for her medium. The installation's beauty and complexity kept visitors intrigued and eager to explore before and after they realized every part had been made from re-used plastic bottles. *The Great Indoors* was a magical work of art that touched the imaginations of visitors from all walks of life. One viewer wrote in our guest book, "As a medical student, I find the similarities between this beautiful work and microscopic biology fascinating. I felt like a microbe traveling through the human body."



During Aurora's installation, Hurricane Ike battered Houston. Her hotel lost power and water, so that Aurora, her husband, and their 11-month old daughter were forced to move into Sewall Hall where they experienced less than luxurious living conditions. Yet, Aurora never uttered a complaint; each day she was up early and working, always in a good mood. She was a trooper, a consummate professional who made our lives easier and allowed us to open as scheduled, the only institution in town to do so. Aurora is convinced that something that seems inherently negative has the potential to be transformed into something very positive. For reminding us of this truth in art and in life, I thank her.

Kimberly Davenport
Director



RICE PROJECT CUTTING

GOAL	AMT CUT AS OF 6/24	6/11	6/13	6/20	7/2
2500	788	788			
7000	1956	2372			
7000	2305	2779			
800	492	492			
2000	2199	COMPLETED			



the great indoors

In the 1966 science fiction film *Fantastic Voyage* a team of doctors are miniaturized and injected into a patient in order to repair a blood clot in his brain. Along the way they journey through alveoli and arteries and fight off white blood corpuscles. The special effects are kitschy by today's standards, stuff like Cheerios and strawberry milk were used to achieve the film's biological visuals. But when I saw *Fantastic Voyage* on TV as a kid it was pretty incredible, creepy but fascinating. Aurora Robson's installation *The Great Indoors* at Rice Gallery achieves a similar effect as the artist takes low-tech junk and transforms it into a disconcerting wonderland.

Using 15,000, count 'em, 15,000 stacked, shredded and riveted plastic bottles Robson crafted an environment of translucent tunnels and chambers. Walking through it feels like you are exploring the body systems of some giant organism. To find inspiration for her work, Robson checked out various medical illustrations and surfed the Centers for Disease Control website. The colors of Robson's constructions, visceral reds, pinks and greens - the colors of the abattoir - somehow manage to come across as pretty and fantastical. Maybe it's the light passing through the translucent hues.

To create Robson's work, each plastic bottle had to be washed, its label and any residual adhesive removed. Robson then cut the bottles. She used heat to bend and stretch them and rivets to fasten them together. Green ginger ale and Sprite bottles found their way into the mix but when Robson wanted to vary the hues of the clear bottles she took out her airbrush to give her constructions smooth translucent tints.

Ribbed water bottles are linked together to create arching tubes that resemble ringed tracheas. Smaller tubes look like capillaries. Networks of bottle bottoms create clusters of things that could be cells, moles or fat globules. Robson's organic tunnels lead to a domed center chamber where a glowing red, heart-like organ dangles. Other vaguely spherical constructions are suspended around the gallery like giant viruses. Many of them are lit like the "heart," illuminated by solar-powered LED lights.



Maquette for *The Great Indoors*

There is an environmental angle to Robson's work, but it is unobtrusive. Eight out of ten plastic water bottles become landfill waste and even when they are recycled, the recycling process itself consumes energy. Robson is not only recycling the bottles in a more creative way, she is also using non-toxic water-based paint and solar-powered lights to further "green" her art. Robson has pulled off a pretty amazing feat, she has created an installation with material choices fueled by environmental concerns but those concerns don't come across as the subject of her work. She has used her materials so beautifully and transformed them so effectively that "eco-art" is the last thing you think of when you walk into the installation.

Instead, the artist has given us a world that evokes the amazing internal environments of our bodies. *The Great Indoors* is a *Fantastic Voyage* visitors can make for themselves.

Kelly Klaasmeyer

Kelly Klaasmeyer is a Houston arts writer. This article first appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of *Rice Sallyport*, The Magazine of Rice University.

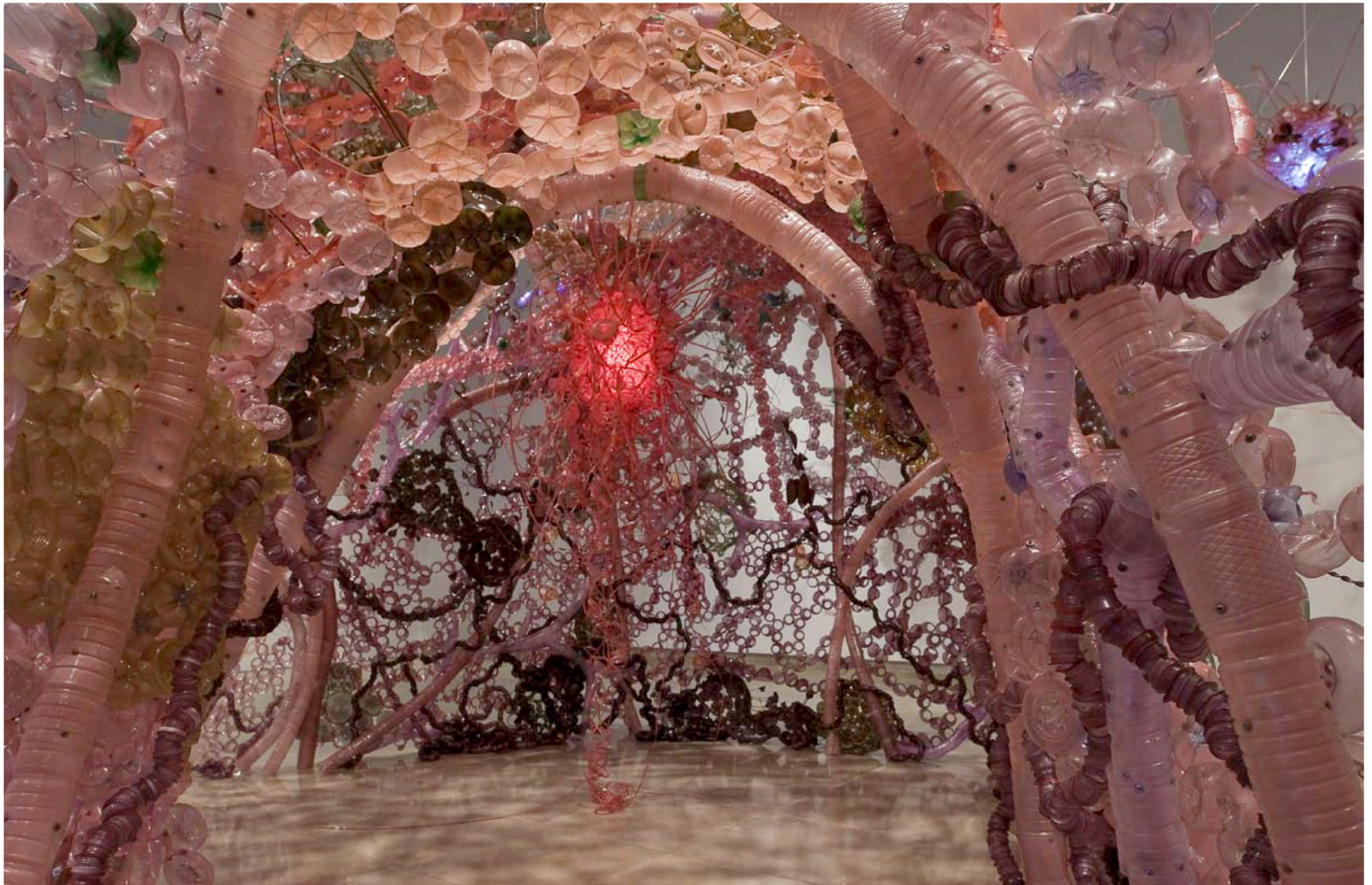




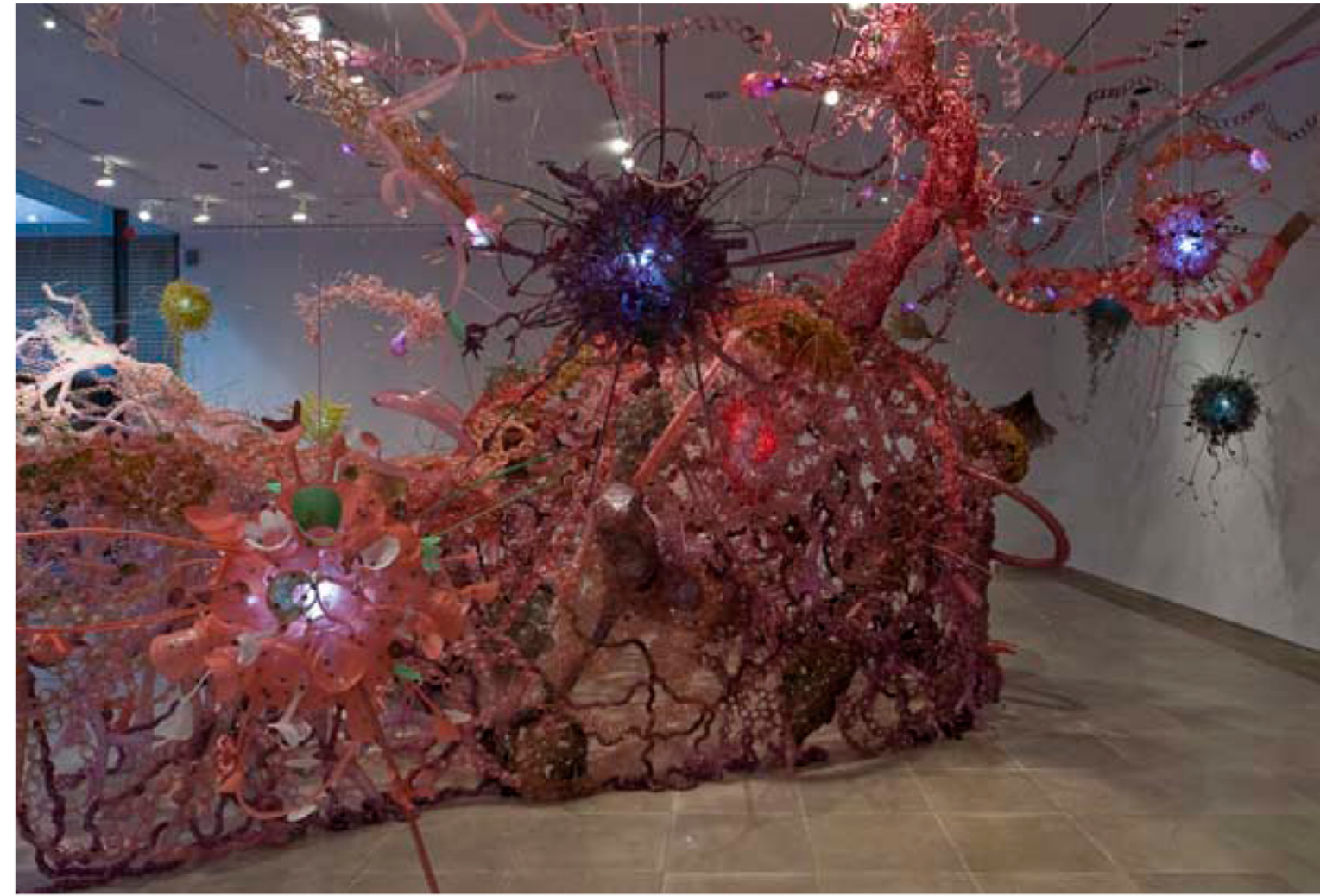


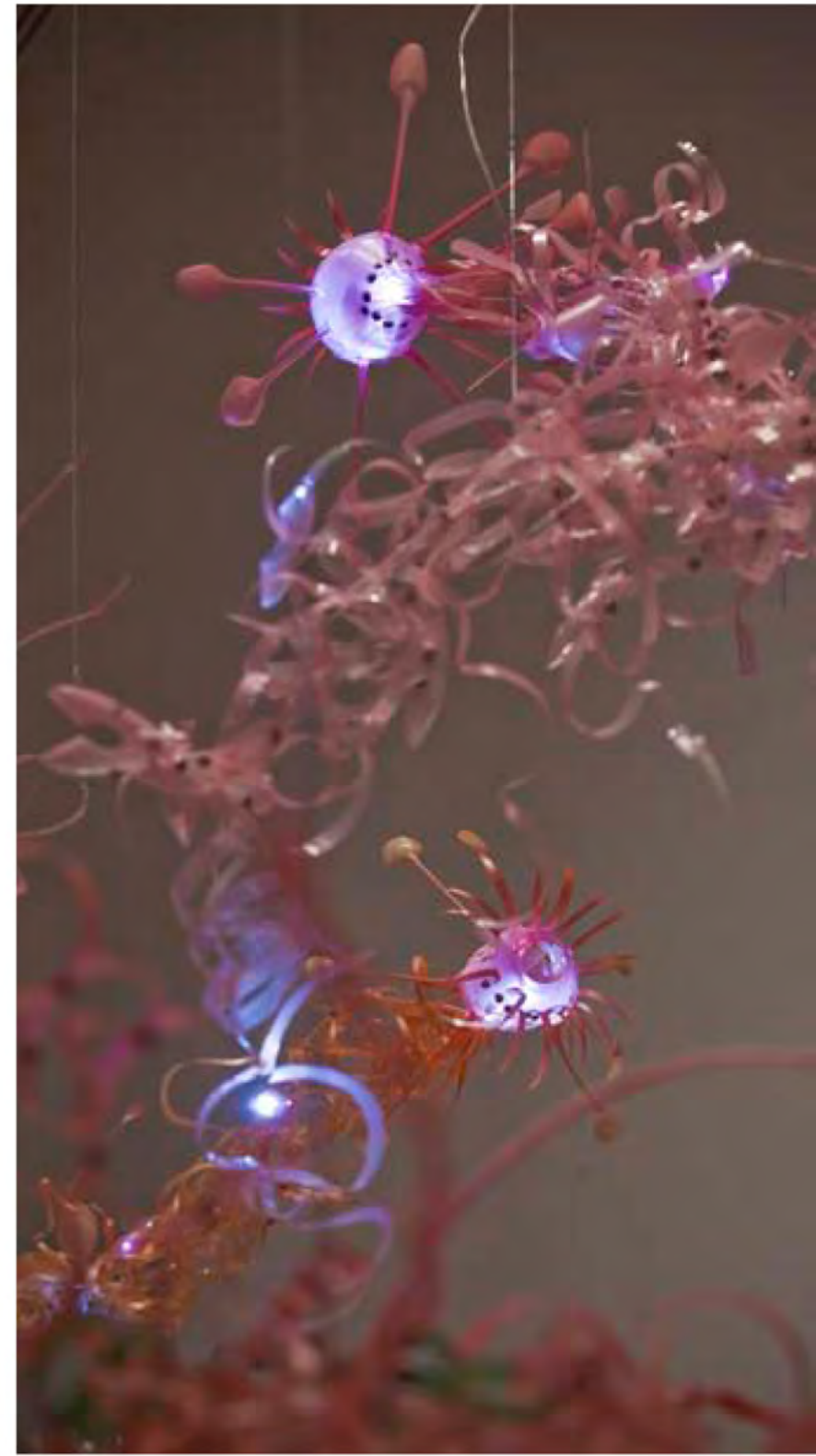




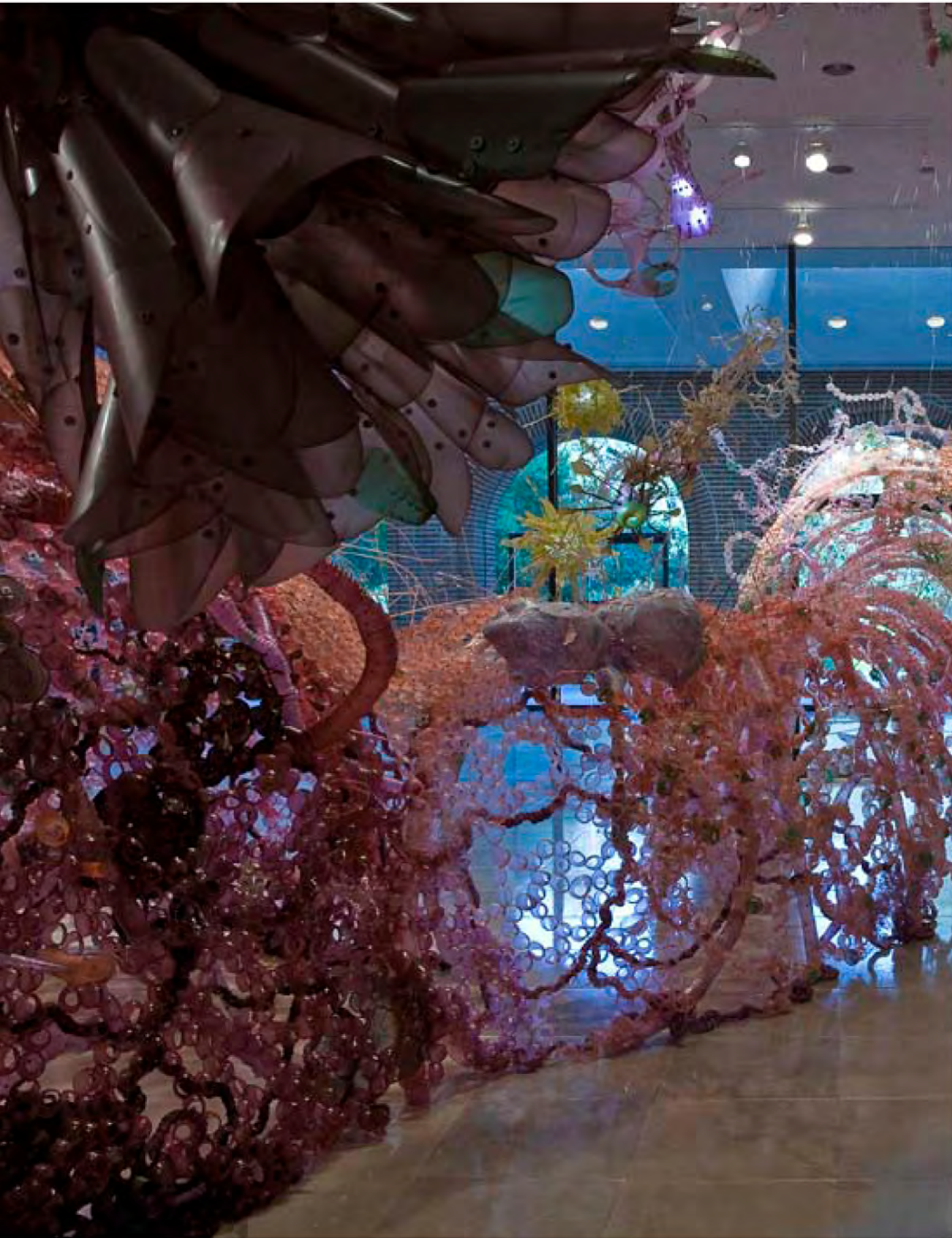


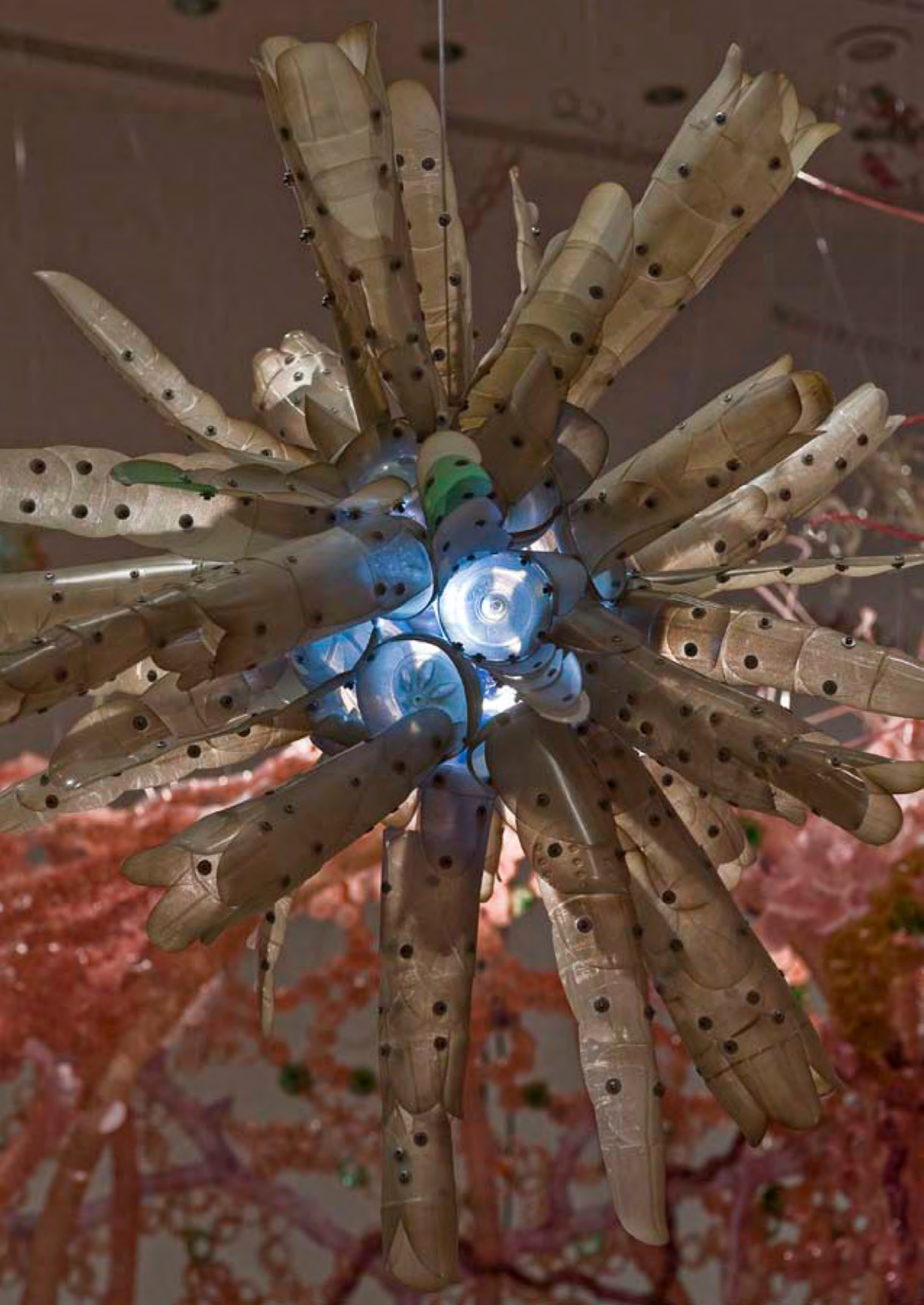






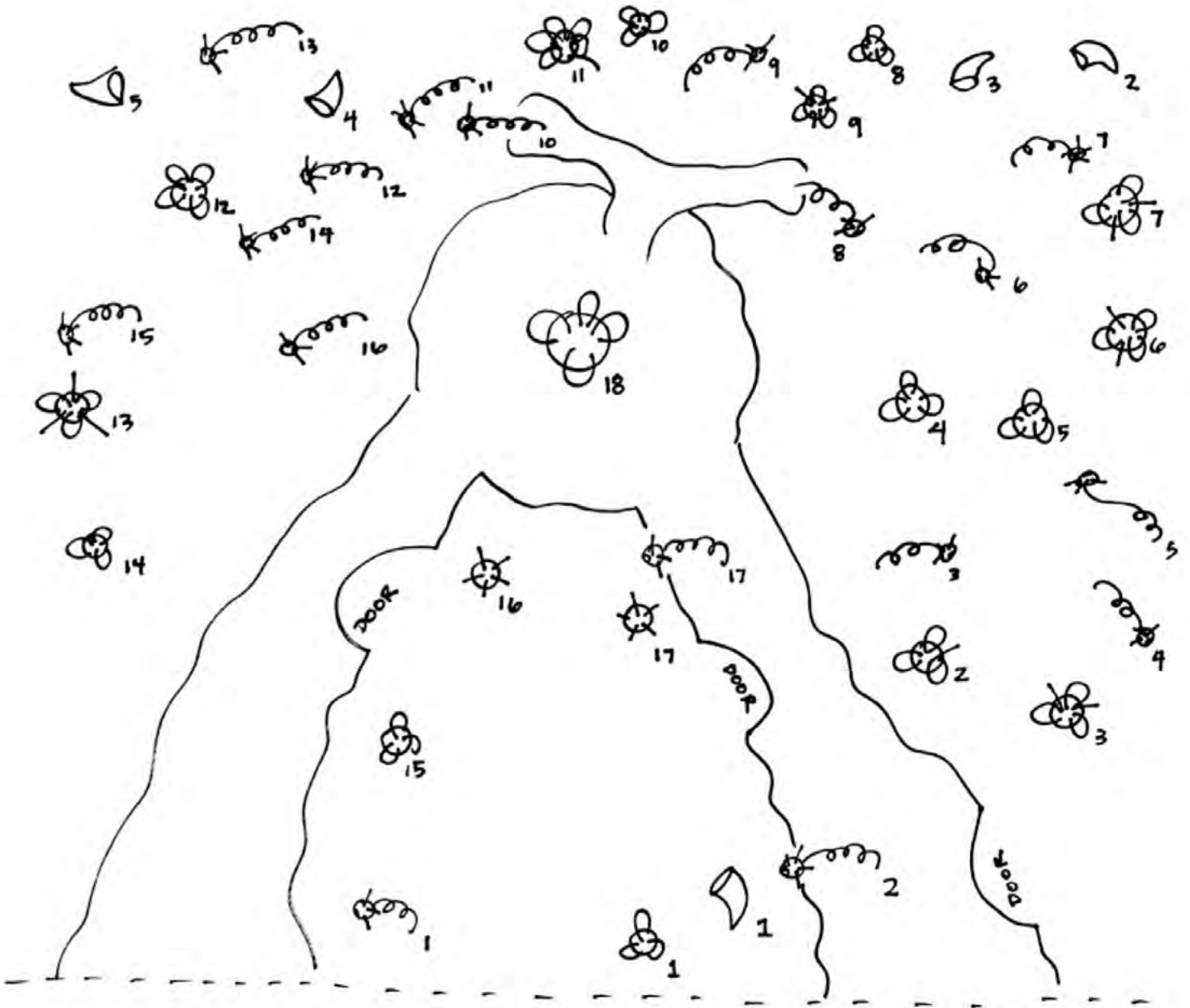
















MAP 

INDIVIDUAL HANGING COMPONENTS

- ⑱ ORBS/VIRUSES/CELLS/ HAIRBALLS =  OR  (SOLAR POWERED)
- ⑰ SPIRILUS/EYESHIMP =  (SOLAR POWERED)
- ⑤ ALVEOLI/VORTEXES = 

- ⑱ ORBS/VIRUSES/CELLS/HAIRBALLS
 1. PEORIA
 2. FLO
 3. CELLULIGHT
 4. POLLOP
 5. AMYGDALA
 6. RUBELLA
 7. BUZZ
 8. BLOOD BLISTER
 9. LIVER SPOT
 10. VESPER
 11. GREY MATTER
 12. YELLOW FEVER
 13. LOVE NUT
 14. BALLSY
 15. SON
 16. BUTTERBALL
 17. SPIKED CELL
 18. SCARLET FEVER

- ⑰ SPIRILUS BACTERIA/EYESHIMP
 1. BOLA (ICELANDIC FOR PIMPLE)
 2. LOVE BITE
 3. KINER
 4. CUTICLE
 5. LASH
 6. MCLOVIN
 7. BRUISER
 8. PARA SIGHT
 9. BUG
 10. SMOOCH
 11. ROSACIA
 12. HICKEY
 13. PUPIL
 14. COOTIE
 15. HAIRLIP
 16. BONTECOU
 17. VARTA (ICELANDIC FOR WART)

- ⑤ ALVEOLI/VORTEXES
 1. ALVEOLI
 2. ALIEN SEX FIEND
 3. VORTEXAS
 4. IRIS
 5. UP SYNDROME



about the artist

Aurora Robson was born in Toronto, Canada in 1972, but grew up in Hawaii. In 1991, she moved to New York City to pursue her artistic career. She attended Apex Technical School and became an NYS certified structural welder and for many years ran her own welding studio. Later, she entered Columbia University, where she studied under sculptor Jon Kessler, graduating *magna cum laude* in 2000 with a BA in Visual Art & Art History. Robson works extensively in painting, collage, and sculpture, and her works have been included in exhibitions throughout the United States. In 2007, she completed *What Goes Around Comes Around*, a large-scale suspended sculpture commissioned by Merrill Lynch for its offices in Hopewell, New Jersey, and a site-specific installation for the Carriage House at the Islip Art Museum, East Islip, New York. Aurora Robson lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



Aurora Robson, *The Great Indoors*
Commission, Rice University Art Gallery
18 September – 26 October 2008

Rice University Art Gallery is located in Sewall Hall on the campus of Rice University, 6100 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77005, and on the web at ricegallery.org.

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